

# **TOPICS OF DISCUSSION**

- MAKING LIFE NORMAL AGAIN
- CHANGES
- CHILDREN
- REESTABLISHING INTIMACY
- SINGLE SERVICE MEMBERS
- GOING BACK TO WORK
- HOMECOMING LET-DOWN

# **INTRODUCTION**

- REUNION IS A MAJOR EVENT FOR ALL CONCERNED
- REUNION CAN BE AS CHALLENGING AS DEPLOYMENT
- REUNION DIFFICULTIES OFTEN COME FROM CHANGES DURING SOLDIER'S ABSENCE
- REUNION STRESS IS NORMAL

# **ACHIEVING NORMALCY**

- LIFE AFTER DEPLOYMENT IS DIFFERENT
- REUNIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT
- RECOGNIZE STRESSORS:
  - PHYSICAL
  - MENTAL
  - SUBSTANCE ABUSE
  - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# **CHANGES**

- PEOPLE LEFT BEHIND BECAME MORE INDEPENDENT IN SOLDIER'S ABSENCE
- THEY ACQUIRED NEW ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND NEW SKILLS
- THE HOUSE RULES MAY HAVE CHANGED
- THEY MIGHT HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT SOLDIER BEING BACK

# **DEALING WITH CHANGE**

- TRY TO APPRECIATE THEIR GROWTH
- DON'T ROCK THE BOAT TOO FAST
- RE-NEGOTIATE ROLES

# **CHANGE IS GOOD**

PERSONAL GROWTH AND  
INDEPENDENCE ENHANCE  
RELATIONSHIPS *IF* EVERYONE ADAPTS  
AND INCORPORATES THOSE  
CHANGES INTO THE RELATIONSHIP

# **RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES**

- COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND HONESTLY
- AVOID CRITICIZING YOUR PARTNER
- APPROACH EACH OTHER AS EQUALS
- DON'T EXPECT OLD PROBLEMS TO GO AWAY

# COMMUNICATION

- SOME WILL WANT TO TALK ABOUT ACTIVITIES; SOME WILL NOT
- SOME WILL KEEP GETTING ASKED ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITIES
- SOLDIER MAY MISS THE EXCITEMENT OF THE DEPLOYMENT FOR A WHILE
- THINGS WILL HAVE CHANGED WHILE SOLDIER WAS GONE

# **COMMOMO (CONT)**

- FACE-TO FACE COMMUNICATION MAY BE HARD AT FIRST
- SPOUSES MAY HAVE NEW FRIENDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS
- YOUR PRIORITIES AND OUTLOOK MAY HAVE CHANGED
- YOUR PETS MAY ACT OUT

# **REESTABLISH INTIMACY**

- SEX AND INTIMACY ARE DIFFERENT
- EXPECTATIONS - EXPECT MALFUNCTIONS
- CHOOSE INTIMACY OVER SEX
- “MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS”
  - MEN FIX
  - WOMEN SHARE

# **SINGLE SOLDIERS**

- COMMUNICATION CAN EASE YOUR TRANSITION
- BE PATIENT
- RECOGNIZE AND ADAPT TO CHANGE
- GO SLOW - STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN
- COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY
- TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT CHOICES

# **SINGLE PARENTS**

- COMMUNICATE WITH CAREGIVER
- BE PATIENT
- INVOLVE CAREGIVER IN TRANSITION
- CHANGES ARE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN
- CHILDREN WILL FEEL OUT OF CONTROL, LET THEM HAVE INPUT

# **NEW FATHERS**

- BABIES COST A LOT - BE PREPARED
- UNDERSTAND SIBLINGS' RESPONSE TO NEW ADDITION
- YOU MAY HAVE SOME JEALOUSY OR GUILT TOWARD BABY
- SUGGESTION: ACCEPT YOUR ABSENCE AS UNAVOIDABLE, THE BABY WILL NEED YOU

# **RETURNING MOTHERS**

- MOTHERS OFTEN HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR KIDS:
  - NURTURERS
  - PRIMARY CAREGIVERS
  - TEACHERS
- BE SENSITIVE TO A CHILD'S NEEDS: SOME INTERNALIZE MOM'S ABSENCE WHILE SOME WANT TO RECONNECT

# **CHILDREN**

- DETERMINING FACTORS:
  - AGE
  - PERSONALITY
  - PAST EXPERIENCES
  - RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
  - SEX OF THE PARENT GONE

# **KID ISSUES**

- MAY NOT KNOW YOU WHEN HELD <1
- HIDE OR BE SLOW TO APPROACH 1-3
- GUILT OR SCARED ABOUT YOUR ABSENCE 3-5
- DEMAND TIME AND ATTENTION 6-2
- MOODY OR ACT DISINTERESTED >13
- DIVIDED LOYALTIES AND FEAR - ALL

# **MORE KID ISSUES**

- MAY BE GLAD TO SEE YOU BUT NOT ACT LIKE IT
- YOU MAY SEEM LIKE A STRANGER
- THEY MAY FEAR YOU
- LIMITED COPING BEHAVIORS
- MEET ACTING OUT WITH UNDERSTANDING, NOT PUNISHMENT

# **DEALING WITH YOUR KIDS**

- MAKE SURE THEY KNOW HOW HAPPY YOU ARE TO SEE THEM
- PRAISE THEM FOR HELPING OUT WHILE YOU WERE GONE
- REASSURE THEM CONSTANTLY
- INCLUDE IN YOUR SHARING OF EXPERIENCES
- SHOW INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIVITIES

# **BACK TO WORK**

- ADJUSTING TO WORK CAN BE AS AWKWARD AS ADJUSTING TO HOME
- TO DEAL WITH THESE CHANGES KEEP IN MIND:
  - COMMUNICATION
  - PATIENCE
  - ANTICIPATE CHANGE
  - CHANCE FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

# **WORK SUGGESTIONS**

- DISCUSS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR:
  - YOU MAY HAVE CHANGED
  - SUPERVISOR MAY CHANGED
  - WORK ENVIRONMENT MAY HAVE CHANGED
- AVOID TAKING CHARGE RIGHT AWAY
- FIND OUT ENTITLEMENTS / BENEFITS

# **HO**MECOMING **L**ET DOWN

- IT IS NORMAL
- IT WILL LESSEN AND DISAPPEAR
- CAN BE DUE TO FALSE EXPECTATIONS:
  - RELATIONSHIPS
  - CHILDREN & FAMILY
  - FRIENDS
  - WORK

# **HOMECOMING RED FLAGS**

- WATCH OUT FOR DEPRESSION
  - HOPELESSNESS/DESPAIR
  - LACK OF INTEREST IN ACTIVITIES
  - LACK OF ENERGY
  - CHANGE IN WEIGHT
  - SLEEP DISTURBANCE
  - INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

# **RED FLAGS (CONT)**

- ANXIETY OR PANIC ATTACKS
  - PERSISTENT FEAR, FLASHBACKS
  - AVOIDING PEOPLE, NIGHTMARES
  - JUMPINESS, PERSEVERATING THOUGHTS
- TALK TO SOMEONE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER

# **CONCLUSION**

- REUNION IS A MAJOR EVENT FOR ALL CONCERNED
- REUNION CAN BE AS CHALLENGING AS DEPLOYMENT
- REUNION DIFFICULTIES USUALLY COMES FROM CHANGES DURING YOUR ABSENCE
- REUNION STRESS IS NORMAL